

Research Article

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Pattern of Hookah Smoking in Tabriz, Iran

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Abstract

Although hookah smoking is common in Iran, there is a little information about this behavior. The aim of present study was to determine the pattern of hookah smoking and its related factors in Tabriz city. Ten coffee houses were selected randomly and a self-administered questionnaire offered to 50 randomly selected hookah smokers in each selected coffee houses. A total of 456 questionnaires were completed. The questionnaire consisted of some questions about demographic characteristics, rate of hookah smoking and reason for hookah smoking. The mean age of the subjects was 39 ± 14.3 (min. 14, max. 80) years old. The results showed that 82% of subjects smoked hookah at least 4 times week (Regular hookah smoker). Fifty-one percent of subjects were only hookah smokers and did not smoke cigarette. Also the majority of subjects believed that hookah smoking was an appropriate solution for cigarette smoking cessation. They believed that hookah smoking was less hazardous and also cheaper than cigarette smoking. This study showed characteristics of hookah smoker in the coffee houses. Based on the results of this study, there is appropriate setting to conduct more researches about effect of hookah smoking on diseases especially in form of case-control study, because more than half of the hookah smokers don't smoke anything other than hookah.

Keywords: Hookah; Water-pipe; Coffee houses; Smoking; Nargileh

Introduction

Tobacco use is an important and preventable risk factor for developing diseases, disability and premature death in the world. According to a World Health Organization (WHO) report, half of the users (nearly 650 million people) die from smoking-related diseases, and 70% of these deaths occur in developing countries [1]. Hookah or water-pipe smoking is one of the traditional ways of smoking in many countries particularly in the Middle East and Africa. Hookah is also known as Shishah, Arghile, Narghile and hubble-bubble. The majority of hookah smokers and even some physicians believe that hookah smoking is safer than cigarette smoking as they believe that it filters out harmful factors of tobacco. However, evidence shows that hookah smoking may be even more harmful [2]. Results of studies have shown that hookah smoke contains different toxins such as CO, nicotine, tar and heavy metals [3,4]. Furthermore, it has been revealed that there is a relationship between hookah smoking and different malignancies such as mouth, stomach, esophagus and lung cancer [2,5]. Hookah smoke also increases cadmium level in hair and nail [6] and decreases pulmonary function [7]. Moreover, the results of a review study on harmful effects of hookah showed that hookah smoking damages the process of oxidation and increases the risk of developing malignancy and infectious diseases [8].

In recent years, a dramatic increase has been reported in the number of hookah smokers particularly among young people [9-11]. The results of two national health and disease evaluations in 1991 and 1999 showed that hookah smoking is increasing in the groups of 15-24 years old in Iran [12]. Overall the rate of hookah smoking across the country is 5.3% and in the south cities is 8.2% [13,14]. Unfortunately, there is a little information regarding hookah smoking pattern in Iran. The aim of the present study was to determine the pattern and characteristics of hookah smoker in Tabriz city.

Material and Methods

In this cross-sectional study, ten coffee houses in Tabriz city were randomly selected. A 20- item self-administered questionnaire was

distributed between 50 randomly selected hookah smokers in each coffee houses. If the respondents were illiterate, the questionnaire was completed by a trained interviewer. To avoid bias, the process of respondent recruitment was conducted at different times of the day.

The questionnaire was developed by the authors through reviewing the relevant literature. It was validated and modified by experts (epidemiologists and psychiatrists that who worked on tobacco smoking). It was then filled out by a small sample (n=25) which resulted in some minor amendments. The questionnaire included questions about hookah smoking status, cigarette smoking (current and past), hookah addiction, hookah smoking during journey and at home, the reasons of hookah smoking as well as demographic characteristics.

According to the results of the previous studies, regular hookah smoker defined as subject who has been smoking hookah at least 4 times per week [15]. Descriptive statistics, chi square and independent *t*-test were used to compare the pattern of hookah smoking between regular and occasional smokers by using SPSS-16 software.

Results

Of the 500 distributed questionnaires, 456 were completed (response rate: 91%). The mean age of subjects was 39 ± 14.3 (range: 14-80) years old. Among respondents 30.6% were single and 65.2% were married, 28.7% had diploma and 26% had university education.

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